

Maximum Living Newsletter

“Dedicated To Our Families As They Take The Grief Journey”

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The Importance of the Candle Ritual

by John D. Canine, Ed.D., Ph.D.

Grief at best is an unpleasant journey. It takes a lot of time, energy, and patience. It is a trip we all try to avoid, but at sometime in our life a trip we all must take.

Sometimes it is difficult to believe you will ever feel better or be able to move forward with your life. It is important to begin to think of the idea of grief as an open-ended process. When one has experienced the loss of someone, it is clear their life is forever-changed by the loss. How are you making changes in your life to adjust to your new way of life?

What you may choose to help you get through this day may not be the same choice you make a month from now. Your process is also forever-changing as you go on with life and attempt to deal with the loss.

To wonder, “Is grief ever finished?” is similar to asking someone, “How high is up?” It is very easy to miss the



Light a candle while looking at your loved ones picture.

movement you are making in the process of your own grief because it may seem small in comparison to the great pain you are feeling.

Grief comes in many forms, the most difficult is the death of a significant other.

Thoughts That Can Help You

- Tell yourself you are okay and focus on your good traits.
- Avoid thoughts that begin with “if only.”
- Tell yourself you will get better.
- Talk about your loved one’s death (tell the story).
- Understand that the healing process includes progress and setbacks.
- Live one day at a time.
- Understand and express your feelings.
- Exercise and eat nutritious foods.
- Be open to new experiences.
- Light a candle while looking at your loved one’s picture.

This last one is so important. Grief is best expressed through rituals. Lighting a candle gives you permission to sit down, look at a picture, think about your loved one and have a good cry! You may sit there for five minutes or two hours.

No matter, it is in our best interest to have these appointed times of grief. It enables you to actualize your loss, express your emotions, and pay your respects. And, most importantly, when you are finished and you blow the candle out...you are giving yourself permission to go on with your life...until the next time you light a candle. Your loved one would want it that way.

This holiday season, light your candle many times!

Dr. John D. Canine is an Author, Educator, Grief Psychotherapist and President of Maximum Living Consultants in Clarkston, MI

We Remember Them

While this is a poem often read at Remembrance Ceremonies, it may be shared at a family gathering, cemetery visit, or other time you honor your loved one.

In the rising of the sun and in its going down,
We remember them.

In the blowing of the wind in the chill of winter,
We remember them.

In the opening of the buds and in the warmth of summer,
We remember them.

In the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn,
We remember them.

In the beginning of the year and when it ends,
We remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength,
We remember them.

When we are lost and sick of heart,
We remember them.

When we have joys to share,
We remember them.

Our loved ones died, but we did not lose them.
They are now a part of us, as we remember them.



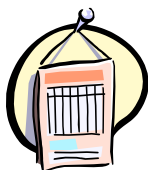
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Presents to Give Myself

To take care of you during the Holidays, make your own December Self Care Calendar. For each day write something you will do for yourself. Examples:

- Search out a long-lost friend.
- Tell someone you love him/her.
- Throw away something you don't like.
- Encourage a young person.
- Let someone do you a favor—ASK!
- Take a different road home.
- Rearrange a room.
- Surprise a child.
- Pop popcorn.
- Clean your wallet.
- Be thankful.
- Talk to a pet.
- Hum.
- Tell a joke.
- Enjoy silence.
- Try a new food.
- Have breakfast in bed.
- Kiss someone.
- Get a massage.
- Take a nap.
- Re-read a favorite book.
- Laugh at yourself.
- Hug someone.
- Say no. Say yes.



There is a Time for Everything

by Shirley A. Brogan, LPC

There is a time for everything,
 And a season for every activity under Heaven;
 A time to be born and a time to die,
 A time to plant and a time to uproot...
 A time to weep and a time to laugh,
 A time to mourn and a time to dance...
 A time to embrace and a time to refrain,
 A time to search and a time to give up,
 A time to keep and a time to throw away...
 A time to be silent and a time to speak...

These words from Ecclesiastes are familiar to most of us. We've read them. They are the heart of a song written and composed by Pete Seeger in the 1950s, and recorded in 1962. The most successful recorded version of the song is performed by the folk-rock band The Byrds, released in October of 1965.

They honor time and change as we move through our lives. The death of a loved one certainly brings change to those who remain in this life, change that is not always easy, or welcome.

I have a T-shirt that reads: "I know that when one door closes another always opens...but *man*, these hallways are the pits!!"

I refer often to the first, or second, November-December after the death of a loved one as a "Hallway Holiday." It's not like it was. It's not yet like it will be. It's one of many transition times of change.

"Holidays mark the passage of time in our lives," write Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler in *On Grief and Grieving*. "They are part of the milestones we share with each other, and they generally represent time spent with family."

We may bookmark the stories and special events of our lives with Holiday dates: the Christmas in 1954 when I got my first two-wheeler, or the Thanksgiving in 1969 when our son announced his engagement. So, what do we do at that first one after a loved one has died? This may be a time when we miss that person even more than usual. How can we celebrate togetherness when there is an emptiness?

Ignore the holidays?

For some, say Kübler-Ross and Kessler, it will make sense to just ignore the holidays.

"The alternative of just going through the motions without any meaning might seem pointless – the worst loneliness of all – so why not just cancel them for a year?" The family feels a huge void, and following old traditions is too hard and sad.

"For others in grief, staying involved with the holidays is a symbol of



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Doors yet to open

A Time for Everything...*(Continued from page 2)*

life continuing. For them, celebrating the holidays creates a time to be with other loved ones and not to feel so alone. It is a time for some to find meaning and to reflect upon all that has been lost."

Giving it a Time and Place

Some families will find it difficult not to observe the holiday – it has its own meaning, especially for children or relatives and friends who don't see each other throughout the year – but they don't want to pretend. They can therefore integrate the loss into the holiday by giving it a time and place. This can be:

- A prayer, or moment of remembrance before a meal, or before gifts are exchanged.
- Attending a Remembrance Candle Lighting Ceremony.
- Telling stories, looking at old photos as you sit by the fireplace.
- Anything that is a simple gesture to reflect the continued presence of your loved one in your heart.

These "Hallway Holidays" may also be a time to review traditions and decide what you want to do. Sometimes they provide the opportunity to release traditions that may have lost their meaning anyway, or no longer fit the family lifestyle.

No matter what you decide to do – and you will probably change your mind several times as special days approach – the holidays will be hard to ignore. Folks around you may wish you happy holidays without any idea that you are grieving, since the holidays will go on despite your deep sadness. You only need to visit a shopping mall to see that.



What about facing a new year?? More immediately, what will the post-holiday winter months be like? I believe the bears have it right. They hibernate to prepare for spring.

Settle into the Quiet

A suggestion made by James Miller, in *When Mourning Dawns*, says to settle into the quiet.

"Try not to run from this quiet period, but stay with it for awhile....It can be a space in which you reflect upon all that has happened, both what has hurt you and what is helping you, where you've been but also where you might be going. It can be a time in which you ponder the meaning of it all."

You might: take a walk, take a nap, organize old photos, work on a *simple* craft project, write in a journal, listen to music, prepare homemade soup – and eat it!

Time with friends at a support group, sharing what this holiday season and upcoming year mean to you, may give comfort and hope for this journey through grief.

GRIEF RESOURCE CENTER

For additional resources, please visit the [GRIEF RESOURCE CENTER](http://www.maximumlivingconsult.com) at: www.maximumlivingconsult.com

SUGGESTED HOLIDAY READINGS**How Will I Get Through The Holidays? Twelve Ideas for Those Whose Loved One Has Died.**

by James Miller. Ft. Wayne, IN: Willowgreen Publishing.

Holiday Blues-A Self-Help Manual on Grief through the Holidays.

by Dr. Clarence Tucker & Dr. Cliff Davis (order through Centering Corporation, 402-533-1200)

Getting Past Christmas: Holiday Help.

by Carlene Enroth (order through Centering Corporation)

A Decembered Grief: Living with Loss While Others Are Celebrating

by Harold Ivan Smith. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press.

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf.

by Leo Buscaglia. New Jersey: Slack Press.

Chicken Soup for the Grieving Soul

by J. Canfield. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications.

Christmas Therapy

by Karen Katafiasz. St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press.

When Mourning Dawns: Living Your Way Fully through the Seasons of Your Grief.

by James Miller. Ft. Wayne, IN: Willowgreen Publishing.

ORGANIZATIONS FOR SUPPORT**Compassionate Friends for Bereaved Parents**

P.O. Box 3696 • Oak Brook, IL 60522 • 630-990-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Widowed Persons

1909 K Street, NW • Washington, DC 20049
WidowNet: www.fortnet.org/WidowNet

WEBSITES WORTH SURFIN'

Centering Corporation - www.centering.org

Willowgreen-(James E. Miller)- willowgreen.com

Grief Recovery - www.grief.net

Journey of Hearts - www.journeyofhearts.org

For Teens Experiencing Loss - www.fireinmyheart.com



What soap is for the body, tears are for the soul. -Jewish proverb

Maximum Living Support Groups

The purpose of the Support Group is to come together and draw strength and support from each other during this time of loss. The meetings are part of the community outreach program of our Funeral Home and are available at no charge. Please feel free to attend and know that your friends and family members are always welcome.

The following Support Group is available in your area, for a complete listing, please go to: www.maximumlivingconsult.com



A grief shared is halved, a joy shared is doubled.